

May 24, 2006

Dear Colleen,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Deborah Jendro. I am one of the 2006 Partners in Policymaking graduates from North Dakota. At this time, I would like to personally thank you for sharing your knowledge and creativity; for putting forth the word and taking up the pen that created the magnificent masterpiece...Partners in Policymaking. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of such a self enriching and empowering event. Over the course of the eight times we came together as a group, I was witness to a revolution of change and transformation, and an adjustment to a way of thinking, speaking and doing.

As a group, we became fast friends...honoring each other for who were and the roles we play in this vast world. We learned the importance of respect and came to recognize the significance of "people first language." With each lesson learned from our great presenters, we gathered more courage and became stronger and more effective leaders and advocates in the work for rights of people with disabilities.

With an eagle's eye, I watched my fellow partners' flourish and grow. The shy one mellowed into a beautiful song with magical and mystical words that led to smiles and the nodding of heads amongst those of us that could see it in her and now could feel it as well! The fearful mustered up his voice and declared he would find a place to live away from the institution and by golly...before all was said and done, he had moved to a group home and had his own room. He had taken his first step towards independence.

Enthusiasm radiated and a great sense of pride and self confidence bubbled from success and accomplishment. The sheltered became worldlier when presented with a computer by a fellow partner that gave way to opportunity and excitement. By graduation, she had her own web site and the venture of a job online working out of her home. The woman who could not see took her advocacy skills to the voices of her city and before long, chirping stop lights were in place on the main streets of her home town. Such a triumph! These are just a few tales that can be found amongst the chronicles of ND Partners in Policymaking 2006!

Blessings to you as you continue on in your great work. Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deborah Jendro". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large loop for the 'D' and a long, sweeping tail for the 'J'.

Deborah Jendro